

ADE DAILY NEWS CLIPS

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Education notebook (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

NLR set to break ground on schools

The North Little Rock School District will conduct not one, not two, but five groundbreaking ceremonies over a two-day period for new schools and a school expansion this month as part of its \$265.6 million capital improvement program.

The district also will host a community meeting on the construction that will reduce the 21 campuses to 13, nearly all of which will either be built anew or renovated. That meeting is set for 6 p.m. May 30 at Lakewood Middle School's mini auditorium.

In the meantime, the ceremonial golden shovels will get a workout at groundbreakings for new schools. The ceremonies are set for 9:30 a.m. May 21 at Meadow Park Elementary School, 11 a.m. May 21 at Lakewood Elementary School and 1 p.m. May 21 at Amboy Elementary School.

The ceremonies continue at 10 a.m. May 22 for a replacement school for Boone Park Elementary School and at 1:30 p.m. May 22 for the expansion of the North Little Rock High School, West Campus.

Winners named in KIDS GO! contest

The Arkansas Educational Television Network has announced 12 winners of the AETN PBS KIDS GO! Writers Contest, selected from 150 entries from students across the state. The winners are:

Kindergarten: first place, Riley Sellers of Conway with "The Adventures of Joe"; second place, Preslee Wheeler of Conway with "Chip in the BIG World"; third place, Nevaeh Smith of Springdale with "Rainey Nights."

First grade: first place, Mabel Wise of Rogers with "The Dancing Zebra"; second place, Zainab Alwbari of Little Rock with "Ruff's Adventure"; third place, Mallory Price of Rogers with "A Cat Party."

Second grade: first place, Maya Henry of Little Rock with "Sam Finds His Family"; second place, Ashlynn Avey of Timbo with "Noah and Uncle Moco"; third place, Viviana Preston of Booneville with "Stretchy Elizabeth."

Third grade: first place, Lila Wilson of Monticello with "Saving Spirit"; second place, Mark Knepp of Conway with "Tales From The Fridge"; third place, Rami Rapp of Little Rock with "High Tide in Hawaii."

First-place winners are entered in PBS' national contest. All 12 winning stories can be viewed at <http://www.aetn.org/kids/writerscontest>.

Schools get funds for health centers

Seven Arkansas school districts will receive more than \$1 million to implement a school-based health center in their districts for the 2013-14 school year.

Each district will receive \$150,000 during the first year of the five-year grant. The grant award amounts will decrease each year thereafter.

The schools and school districts are: Cedarville Elementary School, Cedarville School District; Washington Middle School, El Dorado School District; Franklin Elementary School, Little Rock School District; Siloam Springs Intermediate School, Siloam Springs School District; Gene George Elementary School, Springdale School District; Waldron Middle School, Waldron School District; and Yellville-Summit Elementary School, Yellville-Summit School District.

The grants, made possible with money from Act 180 of 2009, were awarded by the Arkansas Department of Education's Office of Coordinated School Health in collaboration with the Arkansas Department of Health and Arkansas Medicaid in the Schools.

With the addition of the seven new sites, Arkansas now has 21 school-based health centers.

Fort Smith student a Senate page (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

WASHINGTON -William Jenner, a Fort Smith high school junior, has spent his days this spring on the U.S. Senate floor, delivering messages and documents to lawmakers. One of 30 Senate pages, Jenner got a closeup look at debate in the upper chamber of Congress.

At first, Jenner didn't know whether he wanted to take part in the program.

Sen. John Boozman, a Republican, was told by his party's leadership in late December that he could sponsor a page.

Although it was already Christmas break, Boozman said his staff asked high school superintendents throughout the state for recommendations.

Jenner got high marks from administrators at Southside High School, and Boozman contacted the student while Jenner was in Annapolis, Md., visiting cousins.

But Jenner hesitated. Going to Washington would mean packing up and leaving Arkansas within a few weeks and taking part in a demanding academic program while attending to the senators on the floor. There wasn't much time to mull over his decision.

"I needed to think about it," he said.

“He was really torn,” added Jenner’s mother, Kyra Jenner, assistant U.S. attorney for the Western District of Arkansas.

In the four months he’s been in Washington, Jenner has witnessed history. Two experiences so far are high-water marks. One was in April when Vice President Joe Biden visited the Senate to press lawmakers to pass gun-control legislation.

“That was a hot topic,” he said.

Another was in March, when Kentucky Republican Sen. Rand Paul took to the floor in a 13-hour filibuster that ended after midnight.

“I was really excited,” he said. “It was the first really late night we had. The Capitol was almost empty.”

Although he was sponsored by a Republican, Jenner declined to talk about his politics, explaining that pages are expected to steer clear of partisanship.

“I like to listen to both sides,” he said.

Jenner’s day begins at 5 a.m. in the pre-dawn darkness at the Daniel Webster House, a dormitory and classroom building a few blocks from the Capitol.

He and the 29 other Senate pages attend their first class at 6:15 a.m. After class - Jenner is taking pre-calculus, chemistry, American literature and American history - he and the other pages, each dressed in a navy blue blazer and white shirt, walk to the Senate chamber.

The congressional page program dates to 1829, when Daniel Webster appointed the first page.

Arkansas’ Sen. Mark Pryor, a Democrat, served as a House page in 1982, and ran errands for House members with whom he now serves in the Senate, including Sen. Dick Durbin, an Illinois Democrat.

Back then, before cell phones, the House cloakroom was “wall to-wall” phone booths, Pryor said. More than 100 times an hour, he said, House offices would call, asking when the next vote was or trying to find a congressman. Calls for members sent pages scurrying onto the floor, looking for congressmen.

“That was our mission, trying to find people,” Pryor said.

This summer, Pryor will sponsor Jukurious Davis of Helen-West Helena. Davis attended the Knowledge is Power Program Delta Public Schools before being accepted in 2010 to St. Paul’s School, a college preparatory school in Concord, N.H.

Jukurious wants to be a page because he has a passion for politics.

“With this passion comes responsibility,” he wrote in an e-mail. “As a young adult who will play a part in leading our world, it is my responsibility to learn from current leaders.”

The House discontinued its page program in 2011 after reports of misbehavior by some pages and inappropriate text messaging between a House member and former pages.

Senate pages can serve for the fall or spring semester and during two shorter sessions in the summer.

Kyra Jenner is proud of her son, who is getting the “away from-home” college experience two years early.

She gets overcome with emotion, she said, when she walks by the piano - William is a classically trained pianist who has played since he was 5 - and that she changes the bed linen even though he hasn't slept in his room lately.

“I guess I'm corny,” she said.

William has given Kyra Jenner reason to be proud, Boozman said: “He's doing a tremendous job.”

Adopted' elephant a lesson for LR class (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

The pairing of fifth-graders at Little Rock's Wakefield Elementary and an orphaned elephant at a Kenyan wildlife sanctuary is proving to be a mutually beneficial partnership.

Wendy Ward Blasingame's 21 fifth-graders at the southwest Little Rock school are “fostering” Ajabu by contributing \$50 this year toward the care of the infant pachyderm that attracted rescuers' attention last month when it attached itself to tourist vans in southern Kenya.

Baby Ajabu - who wears sunscreen on her floppy ears and does not yet reach the height of a keeper's waist- is in return helping Little Rock youngsters hone their reading and writing skills, and their social studies and science knowledge.

Main ideas and supporting details, cause and effect, inferences, journal writing and research are among the skills Blasingame's class are perfecting as the youngsters check the website of the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust for news of Ajabu and watch video clips from the sanctuary on the classroom's electronic white board.

“This activity just lends itself to everything,” Blasingame said about the elephant study and how it ties in with the skills that Wakefield fifth-graders are learning as part of the new national common core education standards.

Public schools in Arkansas and in nearly all 50 states are now basing lessons on those national standards.

Karen James, the Little Rock School District's director for elementary literacy, said the writing standards for third through fifth grades call for students to conduct short research projects. Fifth-

graders, in particular, must use several sources to build knowledge of the different aspects of their end-of-the-year topics.

"The topics can vary greatly across the district," James said. She offered as another example the research at Little Rock's Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School into the background of poems and how the work of poets is shaped by their life experiences.

At Wakefield, Blasingame, a 14-year teacher, has led her class in recent days in creating advertisement posters and celebrating Ajabu's 1-month birthday.

"Raise your hand if you would like to share what you inferred about how Ajabu is feeling after seeing the clip this morning," Blasingame directed her fully engaged students one day last week.

"Comfortable," Anissa Montes, 11, replied first. "Playful," "adventurous," "safe" and "curious" were other responses.

"We want to use evidence from the clip to support the inferences," Blasingame continued. "Tell me, how do you know that Ajabu is playful?"

"She was playing hide-and seek with her keeper," Anyla Lloyd, 11, reported.

"Does she have the same keeper every single day?" Blasingame asked.

"No," said the class. "She would get too attached to the keeper and when he leaves she won't eat and she won't sleep, and she'll get sick," Armonti Morris, 11, elaborated.

Jaylon Allison, 11, added that orphan elephants need as many keepers as they would have elephants in their herd. Blasingame agreed, adding that assigning a multiple number of keepers to the baby will ultimately help the animal adjust to the size of a herd once it is able to return to the wild.

Blasingame's pupils spent the rest of the morning reading an article about reintegrating an orphaned elephant into a herd - a process that can take up to 10 years. The children underlined facts about reintegration and wrote them onto a graphics organizer. They would use those facts later in the same day to write their own paragraphs.

"The common core standards tells us exactly what we are supposed to teach," Blasingame said. "We were supposed to do main ideas and details for two weeks, and now we are doing inferencing. We are focusing this year on informational text so, of course, this is informational."

As for the topic for the fifth-grade research papers: "It was their choice to continue with this topic," she said.

Blasingame has used the plight of African elephants killed by poachers for their ivory tusks as a way to engage her classes in past years.

“This year my class insisted that we take it a step further. Instead of just learning about these extraordinary creatures, they wanted to do something to help.”

Blasingame said that after the children learned about the fostering program, they surprised her by putting dollar bills and assorted change on her desk. Within a few days, enough was collected to send to the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust in Kenya.

The trust cares for orphaned elephants of all different ages and then works to return the very social animals to a herd.

The Wakefield pupils decided early on that they wanted to foster one of eight or so animals housed in the trust’s nursery near Nairobi.

The class researched the backgrounds of each baby elephant, Blasingame said. For a homework assignment, each pupil wrote a letter to the teacher explaining his choice for an elephant to foster.

“Ajabu, the youngest, newest baby at the orphanage, won by a landslide. She was only 15 days old on the day our class formally became foster parents,” Blasingame said.

Most of the elephants at the sanctuary were rescued after their mothers died of illnesses, or were killed by poachers or predators. In some cases, the young elephants were left behind when they became too weak or were trapped in man made water wells.

The fate of Ajabu’s mother is not known, according to the Sheldrick website.

Fittingly the young elephant’s name means “mystery” in Swahili.

The baby was found in early April with a still-attached umbilical cord, causing rescuers who loaded her onto an airplane bound for the Sheldrick nursery to think she was only a day or two old when she began following tourist vans.

Her first hours in captivity were spent bellowing for her mother.

Blasingame’s pupils are full of facts about Ajabu and orphaned elephants in general, and they have developed an overarching purpose - to tell others about the dangers facing the animals that share many characteristics with human beings.

The elephants demonstrate emotions, including grief, Alexander Lopez, 11, said.

They rely on their mother’s milk or a facsimile of that milk for two years, and they are becoming endangered because of the demand on the black market for their tusks for making jewelry.

“Every day 100 elephants are killed for their ivory tusks,” Alexander said when asked what he has learned through the research.

“If they keep on killing elephants just for their tusks, they are going to be extinct,” he said.

Fayetteville Man Arrested, Faces Child Pornography Charges (KFSM/KXNW, Fort Smith)

A Fayetteville man faces three felony charges after being arrested by Fayetteville police Friday.

Robert Maynard, 27, was booked in the Washington County Detention Center on Friday afternoon and released on \$2,500 bond later that day, according to the Sheriff's Department website. Maynard faces charges of computer child pornography, distributing, possessing or viewing sexually explicit images of a child and sexual indecency with a child, according to the arrest warrant.

Computer child pornography alleges that a computer is used to seduce a child, or someone thought to be a child, into sexually explicit behavior, the warrant said.

Fayetteville police began an investigation in May 2012 after a complaint was lodged with the Killeen (Texas) police of a man sending sexual images and messages to a 14-year-old girl, the warrant said. Maynard was identified as a suspect through an investigation by the Texas Attorney General's Office Cyber Crimes Unit, the warrant said.

Police executed a search of Maynard's home on the 2500 block of Sycamore Street and several computers, a smartphone and other devices were collected Sept. 4, the warrant said. Maynard told police he met the 14 year old through an internet chat service and said it was possible he sent sexually explicit photos to her, according to the warrant.

Maynard told officers he was a graduate student teacher at Arkansas and he had a laptop at his office. Maynard turned the laptop over to officers and, after police obtained a search warrant, officers found 40 images of a sexually explicit nature involving children between the ages of 9 and 15, the warrant said.